India had announced food assistance of 1 million tons of wheat to Afghanistan. A part of this assistance (85517 tons of wheat) has been converted into high protein biscuits (9526 tons) and has been sent to Afghanistan for its school feeding programme.

During the visit of President of Afghanistan, H.E. Mr. Hamid Karzai to India in March this year, Prime Minister had announced a financial commitment of US$ 70 million, over and above the already available grant of US$ 100 million, for the construction of Zaranj-Delaram road. India and Afghanistan had also signed a Preferential Trading Agreement during the visit.

Japan's opposition on transfer of nuclear technology to North Korea

5021. SHRI RUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether sharing India's concerns, Japan has opposed the transfer of nuclear and missile technology by Pakistan to North Korea;

(b) if so, whether Japan has clearly pointed out that it would affect Tokyo's relations with Islamabad;

(c) whether Japan is also in agreement with the US for imposing sanctions against North Korea for development of atomic weapons; and

(d) if so, whether a number of countries have also joined together to condemn North Korea?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH) : (a) and (b) In an interview given to the Hindu on 2-1-03, Japanese Foreign Minister Kawaguchi answering a question on Japan's view on reports that Pakistan may have played a critical role in promoting North Korea's programme of developing nuclear weapon said, "North Korean nuclear weapon programme is a grave concern for the security of Japan. This programme also directly affects the peace and stability of (the) international community and (the) nuclear non-proliferation regime (as well). From this point of view, we are naturally concerned with a report related to North Korea's nuclear weapon programme." Further on during the course of the interview she added, "as for the reports that Pakistan cooperated with North Korea on the North's nuclear weapons programme, we are naturally concerned with a (relevant) report related to North Korea's nuclear weapon programme. We will continue to observe this issue closely".

(c) As of now there are no reports indicating that Japan is in favour of imposing sanctions on Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (DPRK).

(d) The European Parliament in a resolution adopted on 30-1-03 condemned North Korea's decision to withdraw from the NPT and also called on it to cease its programme to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons in a highly visible and verifiable manner.

Selection of Journalists for official delegations

†5022. PROF. RAM DEO BHANDARY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any instructions have been issued with regard to selection of Journalists for accompanying foreign delegation abroad;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the criteria fixed for selection of the journalists in the delegations accompanying the Prime Minister, the Home Minister or any other official delegations;

(d) the types of the delegations in which the journalists are included;

(e) whether Government would adopt the criteria of seniority, pro-activeness and status of the newspapers/magazines while selecting such journalists; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA) : (a) to (d) The Ministry of External Affairs handles media arrangements for VVIP visits abroad. The selection of journalists for VVIP visits is done so as to include a wide range of newspapers, journals, columnists, agencies and TV networks. The composition of media team is so balanced so as to give maximum possible coverage to the visit, keeping in view India's foreign policy priorities and concerns. Invitations are usually sent to the editors and they nominate the journalists for the VVIP media team.

(e) and (f)The professional reputation and status of the newspaper/ magazine/ agency its reach, its interest in the area being visited, and the overall spread of coverage generated are factored in while deciding the composition of the media team. However, exclusion from the media team in no way affects the freedom of any journalists to travel separately and report on the visit. In cases where media persons travel separately, access to media briefings and other logistical assistance are extended by the Ministry of External Affairs.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.